

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

GUDEBROD INC

Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center

Cugebrod Improves Competitive Position, Employee Morale by Adopting Lean Practices

Client Profile:

Gudebrod, Inc. was established in 1870. It is primarily a specialty textile manufacturer of flat and round braids, twisted yarns, sewing threads, fishing lines, braided lacing tapes, dental floss, and tape. Gudebrod has developed and supplied products to a wide range of industries including medical, aerospace, apparel, jewelry, and fishing tackle. The company is privately owned. Its 162,000 square foot plant is located in Pottstown, Pennsylvania and employs 180 people.

Situation:

In an effort to become more competitive, Gudebrod's managers began to educate themselves on the benefits of implementing lean methodologies in the organization. The company wanted to enhance its competitive advantage in the marketplace by improving capacity and productivity, increasing quality and on-time delivery, reducing costs and inventory, increasing return-on-investment, and satisfying changing customer demands. In addition, the company wanted to build a stronger culture of employee involvement throughout the organization. Gudebrod decided to implement lean practices as a way to achieve its goals, and contacted the Delaware Valley Industrial Resource Center (DVIRC), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for assistance.

Solution:

DVIRC met with Gudebrod's managers to assess areas for improvement. Together, Gudebrod and DVIRC identified the company's challenges and opportunities, which DVIRC classified under the headings of inventory control, productivity, plant layout and space utilization, and miscellaneous production and quality opportunities. DVIRC assembled a comprehensive lean transformation service package for Gudebrod that included training and implementation of lean methodologies with the overall goal of eliminating waste and improving productivity within the organization.

Gudebrod appointed a cross-functional team of employees to work with DVIRC. Using the lean technique of value stream mapping, the team identified waste and inefficiency on its product lines and developed an action plan to make improvements. DVIRC addressed each item on the action plan by initiating multiple continuous improvement events, establishing a steering committee to monitor and drive the progress within the company, and providing education and training throughout the entire project. Immediate benefits include savings in time, costs, and space, increases in productivity, and improved process efficiency. The lean process relies on the experience of a company's employees to identify opportunities for improvement, and a lean company culture empowers them to act on their recommendations. By adopting a lean culture, Gudebrod significantly increased morale by including its employees as stakeholders in the success of the company.

Results:

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- * Reduced average changeover times by 50 percent.
- * Increased Line 1 production by 830 parts per shift.
- * Reduced scrap to reclaim 265 square feet of usable floor space.
- * Gained a 15 percent net increase on the target demand of 15,000 pieces per shift on the Blister Pack product line.
- * Reduced operator walking distance by 22 percent and parts transportation distance by 100 percent.
- * Improved overall employee morale.

Testimonial:

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